

FROM THE EDITOR



Not long ago, I was asked to write an article on the history of the concept of the Silk Road in the 19th and 20th centuries for the Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Asian History. As has become customary in Silk Road studies, I began with Ferdinand von Richthofen and his coinage of the term in 1877, before continuing to trace the evolution of the concept into the 20th century. Just as I was signing off on the final version of the manuscript, however, I received a new submission for the journal. The topic was Richthofen. In and of itself, there was nothing surprising about this, since Richthofen often appears as a central subject in scholarship relating to the Silk Road. More surprising, however, was the author's thesis: that Richthofen was not the first to use the phrase "the Silk Road."

Not only that, the author argued, but Richthofen wasn't the second or even the third person to use it. In fact, the original German phrase (*die Seidenstrasse*) could be traced back nearly forty years before Richthofen's first usage!

That revelation kicks off the latest volume of *The Silk Road*. In it, Matthias Mertens makes innovative use of new online search engines to confirm, beyond any doubt, that Richthofen borrowed the term from someone else. Mertens' article is required reading for everyone who works in Silk Road studies and will change the way we view the origins of this elusive concept. (Alas, the results of his research came too late to inform my own article!). We then turn our attention to an informative and delightful interview that Sonya Lee conducted with Roderick Whitfield concerning his lengthy experience working on the Stein Collection at the British Museum. Next up is Luca Villa's overview of the little known activities of Francesco Lorenzo Pullè, who contributed numerous South Asian artifacts to the now defunct Museo Indiano in Bologna, Italy. In his article, Villa showcases many of the precious photographs that Pullè bequeathed to posterity to document these artifacts, some of which are now lost. Art historian Zhang He then takes us on a sweeping and richly illustrated journey into textile manufacturing and the exchange of artistic styles and motifs across Eurasia. Sergey Yatsenko revisits the minute details and intricacies of Sogdian dress in China, while I attempt to introduce readers to the historical value of modern Chinese colophons appended to the Dunhuang manuscripts during the first half of the 20th century. A selection of book reviews and journal and conference notices concludes the issue.

Now serving in my second year as editor of *The Silk Road*, I am continually reminded of how vast and endlessly fascinating this field of scholarship can be. In order to ensure that it remain so, I encourage readers of this journal to submit manuscripts for consideration to be published in a future issue of *The Silk Road*. Though we cannot all dethrone Richthofen on our first try, we can each and every one of us enrich the field in our own unique ways.

- Justin M. Jacobs, Editor
American University